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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: NCP PLANS FOR BUSINESS AS USUAL AFTER ICC
ANNOUNCEMENT, BUT WARNS THE REGIME "CAN'T CONTROL
EVERYTHING"

REF: A. KHARTOUM 10

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 7

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Following the anticipated ICC indictment of President Bashir, the Ruling National Congress Party (NCP) regime will respond pragmatically and continue to meet its obligations, party officials told CDA Fernandez during meetings in Khartoum January 5 and 6. However, they warned that the ICC may provoke additional conflict in Darfur, and while the government will do everything possible to protect the UN and western diplomats, the situation in Gaza combined with an ICC warrant for President Bashir will inflame tensions throughout the country. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) NCP polchief Mandour al Mahdi told CDA and polchief January 5 that the NCP is planning for "business as usual" after the ICC announcement. Al Mahdi also denied the validity of succession rumors and confidently claimed that "the ICC is a gift for President Bashir - he will gain from that." He stated further that "we are in command and the NCP is one-hundred percent united behind the President." He said that the regime considers the ICC issue to be entirely political and part of longstanding, Western-inspired plots against Sudan and against the oppressed (al-mustada'feen) worldwide, "Gaza, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, much of the third world and Africa, it is all the same struggle."

[1](#)3. (C) Al Mahdi said the regime has prepared a response plan that includes both internal and external political elements, as well as a response to the indictment itself. "The ICC is a process, and there are still many things that can be done," said Al Mahdi somewhat optimistically, apparently indicating that the regime still holds out hope of having the process deferred or modified over time. The regime will continue to meet its obligations to the UN missions, he said, and will remain committed to the peace process in Darfur as well as the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The regime would also push forward on laws currently in parliament including even the controversial referendum law "so that elections can go forward, but we know that the SPLM does not want elections." Chirped Al Mahdi, "our strategy is that everything will go forward as usual."

[1](#)4. (C) However, Al Mahdi warned that the regime "cannot control everything," and warned that the Sudanese people are currently comparing the ICC "conspiracy against President Bashir" to the situation in Gaza. (Note: During loud protests in front of the Embassy on January 5, the crowds had already begun to compare the situation in Gaza to the ICC and threatened violent action against US diplomatic personnel -

Ref A. MFA U/S Mutriff Siddiq, in a meeting with CDA Fernandez on January 6 reported septel, promised that the GOS will continue to provide security and informed us that the National Intelligence Service has many of its own personnel monitoring the protests. End note.) The government will try to maintain security and protect UN and diplomatic facilities and personnel, promised Al Mahdi, but "no one knows what will happen." Al Mahdi argued that the Sudanese people tend to view US actions as a conspiracy and assume that the US is behind the ICC indictment. He pointed to Secretary Albright's 1999 meeting in Kampala with Sudanese political opposition leaders, when the US "had an obvious policy of regime change," and posited that many Sudanese assume that the US is still for regime change in Sudan given the ICC. "We cannot control the youth, the students, all the people" who will be furious at such an action, he added.

15. (C) In a separate meeting with CDA and polchief on January 6, NCP party secretary Qutb al Mahdi (no relation) assured the CDA that the NCP does not view the US "as the enemy," and is in fact eager to engage with the new US administration and build on the relative progress made under the Bush administration. Al Mahdi said there was a new era of trust after the signing of the CPA in 2005, and that has not fully dissipated. What is required now are assurances from the US regarding "what will happen after the ICC" and what will be the new administrations attitude towards the regime in Sudan. The soft-spoken and self-proclaimed pro-American Al Mahdi (he told us he is among a faction within the party "for whom the US is not a monster") asked rhetorically, but with evident concern, "can we work together to control what comes next?" CDA pointed out that there is much that the

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government can do to take control of the situation and ensure that relations with the next US administration get off on the right foot. He gave as an example the Darfur Monitoring Team that the US has proposed to fund in order to assist UNAMID in monitoring a ceasefire, tangibly improving relations with NGOs in Darfur, and taking transparent and early action to begin compensating victims in Darfur as well as rapidly approving US Congressional Delegations when they are proposed, in order to demonstrate that the situation in Darfur has changed since 2003. CDA noted that these are all steps, among many others, that the regime could and should have taken long ago, "now it is quite late, but not too late". Al Mahdi acknowledged that the government needs to improve its relations with NGOs and placed some of the blame on "incompetent bureaucrats" who complicate the situation unnecessarily.

16. (C) Note: In statements to the press on January 5, MFA U/S Siddiq warned that the ICC will have a negative impact on the prospects for peace in Darfur (something he has told us before) because Darfur rebels will use the ICC indictment as justification to ratchet up their attacks against a "criminal regime and a criminal president." NCP polchief Al Mahdi also made press statements on January 5, affirming that the regime will follow through on political commitments in spite of the ICC indictment. End note.

17. (C) Comment: In terms of galvanizing public support behind the regime in advance of the ICC indictment, the situation in Gaza is a godsend for the Sudanese regime. In the first days of the Israeli military action, the Sudanese protests were relatively muted. However, following the ground invasion there has been a marked increase in the size of the protests and the aggression of the rhetoric. So far, this seems to be a wave the regime feels it can ride and control. Assuming the situation in Gaza continues and popular sentiment against the West grows, the regime could well be able to transfer the outrage over Gaza into outrage over the ICC action and support for President Bashir. Both al Mahdis outlined a scenario where the regime initially keeps its options open, tantalizes the West with continued and future cooperation and also hints at dire possibilities should the situation get out

of control. End comment.
FERNANDEZ